

# Wing Tips



108th Wing  
NJ Air National Guard

December 2011, Vol. 12, Issue 11

## Commander's Column

### Corrective eye surgery an alternate to glasses, contact lenses

By Lt. Col. Mark D. Stephenson, 108th Wing chief of optometric services

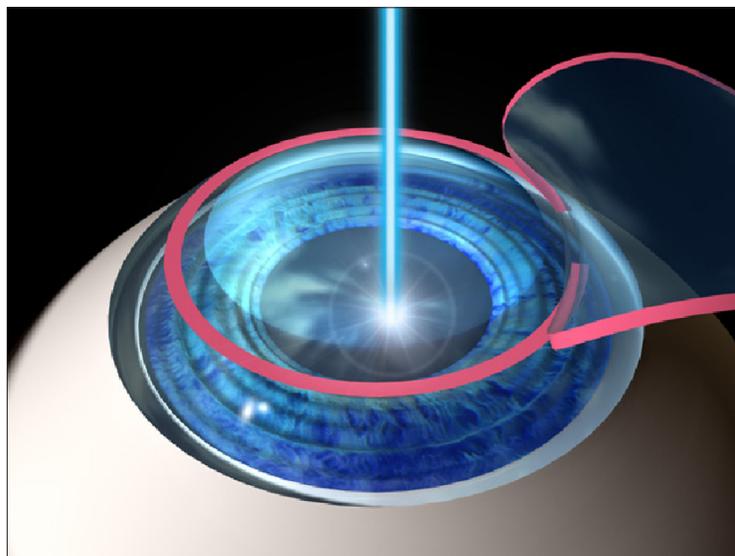
Refractive surgery, as an alternative to glasses or contact lenses, is as strong as ever.

I am answering more and more questions during PHA examinations from all personnel of the 108th Wing concerning their options for LASIK, and if I feel that they are a likely candidate.

As a clinical director at an eye center in North Jersey, I am seeing an increase in patient candidates who are entering the military, FBI, Secret Service, and other types of law enforcement. They want to be rid of the hassles of the glasses and contacts, which could be a hindrance in these career fields. Also, many of the candidates interested in refractive surgery want to apply for aviation related positions within military and civilian career fields.

Refractive surgery, by definition, is performed on the cornea which is the clear organ in front of the iris. When we are born, we inherit most of our refractive errors from our parents and their families. The three types of errors are nearsightedness, which is blur at distance and clear

up close; farsightedness, which is clear at distance and blurry up close; and astigmatism, which is an oval or ellipsoid shape



to the cornea that causes a distortion or "ghost imaging" at distance or near. Most of us have a combination of these errors in both eyes creating the need for glasses or contacts as a corrective solution.

There are two types of refractive surgery that are performed. Which type of surgery depends on a patient's corneal

health, corneal thickness, and any previous injuries to their corneas that could cause some scar formation. The surgeries are LASIK and PRK. LASIK, by definition is performed when a hinged flap is created in the cornea by the Intralase Femtosecond Laser. The corneal flap is gently moved aside by the surgeon, and the refractive error is eliminated by rapid pulses from the excimer surgical laser to the remaining corneal bed. Then the flap is gently repositioned by the surgeon using careful border markings, back into the bed of the cornea. This painless procedure is completed in both eyes in about 15 minutes. The PRK is the same surgical procedure as LASIK, except that the surgeon doesn't create a flap

due to certain corneal conditions. Instead, the outer surface of the cornea called the epithelium is painlessly removed, and the Excimer Laser performs the same surgical procedure. Once the surgery is completed, a medical bandage contact lens is inserted

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JB MDL IS CURRENTLY AT EPCON ALPHA

## LASIK

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and stays on the cornea for one week or until the epithelium is healed.

PRK is not performed as much as LASIK because LASIK gets instantaneous results and more than 95 percent of the patients are 20/20 the next morning. PRK patients are around 20/40 the next morning and get to 20/20 two to three weeks later. By three to four months post-op, LASIK and PRK are equal in clarity with the same wonderful outcomes. Both of these procedures are bladeless and produce quality "high definition" visual acuity in most patients. These bladeless procedures have greatly reduced night glare and star bursts as well.

All Active Duty personnel must get the proper clearances and written permission from their refractive surgery program managers, and their unit commanders before having either of these procedures performed at a Department of Defense laser facility or a civilian facility. Air National Guard aviation and aviation special duty personnel must also get permission from their aviation program managers

and unit commanders before having the procedure. All other non-aviation ANG personnel must get permission only from their unit commanders. Once the procedure is completed, ask the selected Laser Facility for an extra copy of the surgical records to be placed in your medical folder for review. Also, after the procedure, all personnel must see the flight surgeon and the chief of optometric services for the proper clearances for duty and waivers to be documented in their charts. In addition, all personnel will need to see their civilian physicians, flight surgeons and the chief of optometric services for yearly check-ups to maintain their waivers and clearances for duty.

Refractive surgery can be a life changing event for the rest of your life. Always go to refractive surgery Web sites and talk to your eye doctors prior to having the procedure to understand how refractive surgery works, and to see if you are a good candidate for either procedure. Also, read AFI 41-101 Regulations on Refractive Surgery. If you should have questions about this procedure, you can contact the 108th Wing's chief of optometric services for further guidance.



**Master Sgt. Dennis Barnes, 108th Communications Flight, is the winner of the Safety Quarterly Award for FY11, 4th quarter. As a communications maintenance worker, Barnes has never had a workplace injury during his 28 year military career. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Raymond Knox, 108th WG/PA)**

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# A Message From the Safety Office

## Safety tips to help you have a Happy Holiday

As the holidays draw near, decorative lighting and special effects become important components of the festive season. Christmas trees, in particular, are a traditional part of the season. And although they are special, trees pose a definite safety risk.

If you're using a natural tree this year reduce the risk of a tree fire by taking the following precautions.

1. Choose a freshly cut green tree, not one that has dried out through weeks of storage. If you are buying one from a tree lot, tap the trunk on the ground; if several needles fall off, it's too dry. Needles that bend and are not easily pulled off indicate a fresh tree. Consider a potted Christmas tree so you can plant it in your yard once the holidays are over.

2. Before setting it up, cut two inches diagonally off the butt. The tree will draw water more easily from a fresh cut.

3. Stand the tree in a tub or bucket of water and keep the tree trunk immersed to prevent the tree from drying out.

4. Select a safe location for the tree, away from drapes and curtains and from drying and heating sources such as registers, radiators and television sets. Don't block doors or windows which might be used to escape in an emergency and never put a tree near a fireplace!

5. Use a tree-stand with widespread legs for better balance and a large water reserve in which to immerse the tree butt. Check the water level every day and add more as required.

6. Check your Christmas lights for defects. Spread them out on a non-flammable surface before installing them. Make sure there are no broken bulbs, all electrical cords are free of cuts or



frays and the plugs are in good condition.

7. Extension cords should never be placed under carpets or where they could be a tripping hazard.

8. Don't leave the Christmas tree lights on if there is no one in the room.

9. If the tree begins to lose an excessive amount of needles, remove it immediately.

10. Never burn your tree in the fireplace!

These safety tips will help prevent your Christmas holiday plans from going up in smoke!

## *Psychological Health Director brings wealth of experience to 108 Wing*

**By Staff Sgt. Brian Carson,  
108th WG/PA**

The new psychological health director for the 108 Wing, Jill Barrett, LCSW, brings with her a wide array of knowledge and experience in dealing with the numerous challenges that being in the military can have on a service member and their family.

The stress that military member's face due to deployments and the possible issues that arise out of it, require extensive training that are unique and not everyone has the experience to deal with effectively. But Barrett personifies those requirements.

Although this is a relatively new position within the Wing, Barrett is not new to the issues facing today's military member.

"Before joining the 108th, I served as the Family Life Consultant with the New Jersey National Guard State Family Programs Office; prior to that, I was the civilian family and adolescent counselor on military installations in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands," states Barrett.

In addition, prior to moving overseas, Barrett worked extensively with victims of the 9/11 attacks, and specialized in trauma and grief counseling.

Given this background, it would be safe to assume that

Barrett works exclusively with trauma and severe counseling issues; however, that is not always the case.



"I am available to provide presentations to units or groups on a variety of topics to enhance wellness such as stress management, communication, conflict resolution, and relationships," states Barrett. "In

addition, I can meet with 108th members to provide a clinical interview and referral to local mental health providers and other resources to address any issues hindering a member's

maximum well-being."

While most members know that these services exist in some way, shape or form, it can be difficult at times to see the benefits of using these services if some form of trauma or serious condition is not present.

"Maintaining good psychological health can improve your job performance, enhance your relationships, and advance your skills for personal growth," states Barrett.

"If an issue arises, members can receive confidential feedback and resources in order to resolve issues quickly and I will work with them to get connected with civilian providers in their local area," concluded Barrett.

# Feature of the Month

## 108th SFS Airmen return home just in time for the holidays

By Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 108th WG/PA

They have been counting the days until homecoming since the day they departed early this summer. And on Dec. 2, the wait ended for some family members of security forces Airmen from the 108th Wing.

Eight Airmen from the 108th Security Forces Squadron returned home from Iraq to hugs and kisses late Friday night and were finally reunited with their loved ones at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.

The Airmen served honorably in the Middle East for approximately six months, and they came home just in time for the holiday season as the drawdown of military troops from Iraq continues.

Although she Skyped at least once a week with her husband, Staff Sgt. Donald Bunce, she was happy to finally have him back, said Mary Bunce, a Wrightstown resident.

"We'll plan a trip to the Caribbean next year," said Mary Bunce.

But for now they just want to enjoy their reunion and their fifth wedding anniversary in February, said Mary Bunce.

In addition, the Airmen are very grate-



Staff Sgt. Donald Bunce, center, is all smiles as he is reunited with his sister, Ashley Laramai, left, and his wife, Mary, right, on Dec. 2, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., from a recent deployment to Iraq. Bunce was one of eight Airmen from the 108th Security Forces Squadron returning home from the approximately six-month deployment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 108th WG/PA)

ful to be home early for the holiday season.

"I am ecstatic!" said Senior Airman Keri Wanner of Scotch Plains. "It's all so

surreal."

With the help of her father, Kevin, Wanner plans to surprise her family. "Nobody knows that I am back except my father," said Wanner. So she will be visiting her family around the state this weekend



Eight New Jersey National Guard's Airmen from the 108th Security Forces Squadron returned home Dec. 2, from a recent deployment to Iraq. From left to right, Staff Sgts. Omar Navarro, Newark resident and Miguel Eusse, Linden; Tech. Sgts. Dennis Callan, Philadelphia and Chris Gable, Somers Point; Staff Sgt. Donald Bunce, Wrightstown; Senior Airmen Errol McCalla, Belle Mead and Keri Wanner, Scotch Plains; and Staff Sgt. James Cervone, Chicago, Ill., pose for a group photo at the 108th SFS building at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 108th WG/PA)

*"It's all so surreal,"  
Senior Airman Keri  
Wanner*

and giving them a holiday surprise.

"It's always nice to get our Airmen back from overseas," said Lt. Col. Brian Griefer, commander of the 108th SFS. "These are our missions but it feels good when they come back safely, especially from over there."

During their deployment in Iraq, the security forces Airmen conducted air base defense, which consisted of ensuring the security of the base; manning the gates for entry and exit into the base and perimeter patrols.

# Managing the holiday stress

Although it's easy to envision a marvelous, relaxed holiday season full of pageantry, positivity, and perfect pies, this is not what the splendor of the season always delivers. For many, this time of year is the most stressful.

If you feel stressed out by the thought of holiday chores, obligations, and the clan dropping in for a spell—or if this year's circumstances make the holiday season difficult for whatever reason—start preparations now to manage your holiday stress.

Along with good tidings come high expectations based on the commercialization of the holiday season, past childhood memories we may long to duplicate, and the expectations of others.

If family members count on your “holiday magic” to make every year special—the cooking, cleaning, baking, decorating, and gift-wrapping—you face a bigger challenge letting go or finding balance.

Here's how to cope better with expectations, demands, and added pressure during the holidays.

**It's the Most Wonderful Decision of All** - Make a decision to take charge and tackle holiday stress. This mentally prepares you to enjoy the time while facing demands of the season with better endurance.

**Your Priorities** - Decide on your priorities to make the season meaningful. Did you miss the tour of homes last year because the Waltons next door had their open house on the same day? The idea here is to plan a few “non-negotiable” events for yourself.

**Now the Rest** - What activities are important to your brood this year? Seek to trim the “idea tree” to reduce stress from trying to fit it all in. A family meeting to gather ideas can work, and chances are activities you thought everyone still



wanted are no longer of interest.

**Avoid the Rush** - Are holiday lights on the house critical? If yes, go for it, but if it seems more like a “chore” than a pleasurable task, that's a clue about its priority and importance to you. Activities that feel like chores get delayed. Pay attention to procrastination. It is insight to help you decide whether it's thumbs up or down on something that seems desirable.

**Fight the Blues** - If the holidays are a sad time of year because of difficult memories or because a loved one can't be there, discover your personal intervention strategy. Volunteering for a local charity is an interactive experience, and those who've tried it claim it works to lift one's mood. You'll feel empowered and more positive, and the experience of helping others anchors you to a memory that lasts.

**Navigating Around Family Conflicts** - If you can't avoid holiday gatherings with family members who experience feuds and conflicts, try discussing with kin your desire to avoid conflict. Be up

front and ask that differences be set aside. Older adults criticizing teenagers is a famous trigger. So are statements from in-laws that appear critical, interfering, or meddlesome. Self-awareness is power, so you stand a good chance of at least minimizing this behavior.

**Take Care of Yourself** - What improves your mood—exercise, positive affirmations, alone time? During the year, have you been promising to do something for yourself, but keep putting it off? Do it. The holiday season is a perfect time to reaffirm your love, not only for those you care about but also for yourself.

**How Your Employee Assistance Program Can Help** - Holiday stress affects everyone differently, so suggestions here may not match what's unique for you. Don't face the stress alone. Instead, talk to your organization's employee assistance program. The EAP professional will help you find the resilience and strength you need to face any challenge the holidays may bring.



# Odds & Ends



**Suspicious Activity  
Report It!  
McGuire – Dix  
(609) 562-6001**



**Suspicious Activity  
Report It!  
Lakehurst  
(732) 323-2820**



**YOUR EYES AND EARS ARE  
CRITICAL WEAPONS IN THE WAR  
AGAINST TERRORISM...**

No matter how well trained and vigilant, law enforcement officials simply cannot be everywhere. Your eyes and ears – and those of your family and friend – can be of enormous help in preventing terrorism. After all, you know best what activities do – or do not – belong in and around your base, house, neighborhood, and community.

To enlist your help in preventing terrorism, the Joint Base Antiterrorism office would be grateful to use you as a “Force Multiplier”, this puts you on the antiterrorism team by providing you the information that you will need to recognize and report suspicious behavior.

Your inputs – which can be submitted 24 hours a day – are immediately shared with appropriate law enforcement agencies and military commanders for rapid assessment and investigation as necessary.

You and your family are encouraged to stay alert to your surroundings, whether on the installation or off, at home or elsewhere. Be on the look out for suspicious activities described in the brochure.

**Seven Signs of Terrorism**

Certain activities, especially those at or near sensitive facilities, including government, military or other high profile sites or places where large numbers of people congregate, may indicate terrorist planning phases.

Suspicious activities of interest that should be reported to law enforcement are commonly referred to as the Seven Signs of Terrorism.

1. **SURVEILLANCE:** Recording or monitoring activities. May include drawing diagrams, note taking, use of cameras, binoculars or other vision-enhancing devices or possessing floor plans or blueprints of key facilities.
2. **ELICITATION:** Attempts to obtain operation, security and personnel-related information regarding a key facility. May be made by mail, fax, e-mail, telephone or in person.
3. **TESTS of SECURITY:** Attempts to measure reaction times to security breaches or to penetrate physical security barriers or procedures in order to assess strengths and weaknesses.

4. **ACQUIRING SUPPLIES:** Attempts to improperly acquire items that could be used in a terrorist act. May include the acquisition of explosives, weapons, harmful chemicals, flight manuals, law enforcement or military equipment, uniforms, identification badges or the equipment to manufacture false identification.

5. **SUSPICIOUS PERSONS:** Someone who does not appear to belong in a workplace, neighborhood or business establishment due to their behavior, including unusual questions or statements they make.

6. **DRY RUNS/TRIAL RUNS:** Behavior that appears to be preparation for a terrorist act without actually committing the act. Activity could include mapping out routes and determining the timing of traffic lights and flow.

7. **DEPLOYING ASSETS:** Placing people, equipment and supplies into position to commit the act. This is the last opportunity to alert authorities before the terrorist act occurs.

**If you SEE something  
– SAY something !**



## Veterans Job Fair

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New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

&

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**Bring Your DD-214  
&  
Plenty of Resumes**

West Orange National Guard Armory  
Pleasant Valley Way

9:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Tuesday, December 13, 2011**



Employers Attending

Target, Home Depot, Lowe's, Bright Star, NJ Transit, Sovereign Bank, Prudential, Farmers Insurance, Front Line Security, Construction Apprenticeship Union

## Toy, Gift for Kids drive

The Holiday season is upon us, support the annual Toy and Gifts for Kids Drive.

The Toy Drive will run through Dec. 19. Gifts are needed for children of all ages, but the greatest need is for children 10-17 years of age. The gifts should be new and unwrapped. The lobby of DMAVA's Lawrenceville office will serve as the drop-off site for Central Office staff.

Additional drop off locations will be designated at each Veteran Home, Doyle Cemetery, Veteran Haven, and Air Bases.

Please contact your Human Resources Office for locations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Paul Serdiuk via email at [Paul.Serdiuk@dmava.state.nj.us](mailto:Paul.Serdiuk@dmava.state.nj.us) or by phone at 609-530-6878.

The generosity of DMAVA employees and New Jersey National Guard members have helped make the lives of some of New Jersey's most vulnerable citizens healthier, happier and full of hope.